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PHILO.

CONCERNING THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE.

(THE SUPPLIANTS, OR THE FOURTH BOOK CONCERNING VIRTUES.)

1.—I HAVE now spoken of the Essenes who followed with zeal and constant diligence the life of Action, and so excelled in all, or, to say what after all some bear not to hear said, in most particulars. And therefore I will presently, following the due sequence of my treatise, say whatever is meet to be said about them that have embraced contemplation, though without adding aught out of my own mind in order to exalt them unduly, as are wont to do all the poets and composers of tales in their dearth of noble examples. But I adhere simply to the bare truth, before which I know well even the most eloquent tongue will be weak and fail. Yet must I face the struggle and strive to master the task. For the greatness of these men's excellency must not be a cause of dumbness to them that hold that nothing noble should be hidden in silence. M. 471.

But the purpose and will of the lovers of wisdom is discovered in their very name and title ; for they are most fitly called healers,¹ male and female. Either by reason of their professing an art of healing more excellent than that which is found in cities ; for this heals men's bodies alone, but that their souls also, when overcome by diseases difficult and hard to heal, souls smitten and undone by pleasures and lusts and sorrows and fears, by forms of avarice and folly and injustice, and all the countless swarm of passions and vices :—for this reason, or because they have been educated by nature and the holy laws to worship the true Being, which is more excellent than the good, and simpler than the unit, and more primitive than the Monad. M. 472.

And with these men, whom is it proper to compare of those who make profession of piety ? Shall it be those who honour the elements, earth, water, air, fire ? Things to which some have attached one surname, others another, calling fire Hephæstus, I trow because it is kindled ; and the air Hera², because it is raised aloft and uplifted on high ; and water Poseidon, perhaps because it is potable ; and the

¹ The Greek word *Therapeutæ* means both "healers" and "worshippers."

² The writer's puns on the names Hephæstus and Hera cannot be reproduced in English.

earth Demeter, because it seems to be mother of all things, plants and animals. Albeit, these names are the inventions of shallow teachers ; and as for the elements, they are soulless matter, which of itself cannot stir, but is subjected by the artificer to all kinds of shapes and qualities.

Shall we then compare those who worship the finished works of creation, sun, moon, and the rest of the stars, wandering or fixed, or those who adore even the entire heaven and universe ? Yet even these came not into being of themselves, but by the hand of some creator perfect in his knowledge.

Shall we then compare those who honour the demi-gods ? Yet surely this at least is worthy of actual ridicule. For how can the same man be both mortal and immortal ? Not to mention that the very source of their being is open to censure as being tainted with that youthful incontinence, which men impiously dare to attribute to the blessed and God-like Powers ; when they declare that these beings who have no part in any passion and are thrice-happy, were filled with mad lust for mortal women and so chambered with them.

Shall we then compare the worshippers of rude idols and of images ? Yet the substances of which these are wrought, are stocks and stones, things quite shapeless up to a little time before ; the stonemasons and woodcutters having severed them from the masses to which by nature they belonged. And, moreover, their germane and kindred portions have been turned into pails and foot-baths, and into certain other vessels of dishonour, subservient rather to the wants fulfilled in darkness than to those fulfilled in the light of day. For to the rites of the Egyptians it is not well even to allude ; for they have advanced to divine honours brutes which are without reason ; and of these not only the tame ones, but even the fiercest of the wild beasts, from every species under the moon, the lion among land animals, and the crocodile of their country, of those which live in the water ; but of those which roam the air, the kite, and the Egyptian ibis. Albeit, they see these animals being begotten and standing in need of food, and insatiable in respect of eating and stuffed full of excrement, shooting out poison and devouring human beings, and beset with all sorts of diseases, and often perishing not merely by a natural death, but by violence. Nevertheless, they render homage to them, tame beings to the untamed and wild, rational to the irrational, they that have kinship with the godhead to creatures which one would not set on an equality with the apes of humanity, the lords and masters of creation to their natural subjects and slaves.

2.—But, forasmuch as these men infect with their folly, not only their own countrymen, but also those that live in their very neighbourhood, let them remain unhealed, their eyes—the most indispensable of their senses—maimed and useless. And I speak not of the eye of the body,

but of the soul's eye, wherewith truth and falsehood are known and recognised. But, on the other hand, let the Therapeutic kind, that hath not only the eye, but is ever learning beside to see with it, aspire to a vision of the true Being; let it even soar above the sun which our senses behold, and never forsake this post which leads to perfect happiness. But those who draw nigh unto holiness,¹ do so not from custom, nor from advice, or exhortations of any; but because they are rapt by heavenly love, like Bacchants or Corybantic revellers, and are lost in ecstasy until they behold the desire of their souls. But then, out of their yearning after the immortal and blessed life, they esteem their mortal life to have already ended, and so leave their possessions to their sons or daughters, or, in default of them, to other kinsmen, of their own free will leaving to these their heritage in advance; but, if they have no kinsmen, to their comrades and friends. For it needs must be that they who have received the wealth which sees from a free and open store, should resign the wealth which is blind to those whose minds are still blinded.

The Greeks sing the praises of Anaxagoras and Democritus, because, smitten with the desire for wisdom, they gave up their properties to be sheep-runs. I, too, admire these men for having risen superior to wealth. Yet how much better are those who, instead of abandoning their possessions for the beasts to batten upon, ministered to the wants of human beings, kinsmen or friends, aiding them in their need, and raising them from helpless poverty into affluence! For, indeed, their much-praised action was ill-considered, not to use the word "mad," of men whom Greece admired. But the conduct of these is sober, and exhibits the perfection proper to the highest wisdom. What worse acts do one's country's enemies commit than to cut down the crops and hew down the trees of those with whom they are at war, in order that a scarcity of the necessities of life may weigh hard on them and compel them to give in? Yet this is what men like Democritus did to their own blood-relations, inventing an artificial want and hunger for them; not, it may be, of malice prepense, but because they did not look round them and have an eye to foresee what was for the benefit of their fellows.

How much superior, then, and more admirable are these men whom I describe! whose enthusiasm for Philosophy was no whit less than theirs, while at the same time they preferred to be magnanimous to being contemptuous and neglectful; and so freely gave away their properties instead of letting them go to ruin, in order, by so doing, to advantage others as well as themselves—others, by surrounding them with plenty; **M. 474** themselves, by their devotion to philosophy. For the cares of wealth

¹ Literally "Therapy," *i.e.*, the part of those who heal others or who worship.

and chattels consume the users thereof ; but it is well to husband our time, since, as the physician Hippocrates saith, " Life is short, but art is long." And methinks this, too, is what Homer hinted at in the *Iliad*, at the beginning of the thirteenth rhapsody, in these words :—

Of the Masi, fighting hand-to-hand, and of the high-born mare-milkers,
That live on milk, and are simple in life—most just men.

He means that anxiety about life and money-making begets injustice by the inequality it produces, whereas the opposite motive begets justice through equality. And it is in accordance with such equality that the wealth of nature has its limits assigned, and excels that which consists in vainglory and empty fancies.

So soon, then, as they have divested themselves of their properties, without allowing anything to further ensnare them, they flee without turning back, having abandoned brethren, children, wives, parents, all the throng of their kindred, all their friendships with companions, yea, their countries in which they were born and bred. For, in truth, what we are familiar with has an attractive force, and is the most powerful of baits. However, they do not go away to live in another city ; like those who claim of their owners to be sold, unhappy wights or naughty slaves, and who so win for themselves, not freedom, but a mere change of masters. For every city, even the best governed, teems with riots and disasters, and troubles untold, which no one would endure that had once
M. 475. let himself be led by wisdom. Rather do they make for themselves their settlements outside the walls, in gardens or solitary cots, seeking solitude, not from any harsh and deliberate hatred of mankind, but as knowing that the intercourse with and the influence of those unlike themselves in character cannot profit, but only harm them.

3.—Now this kind is to be found in many parts of the world ; for it is right that the Greeks, as well as Barbarians, should have their portion in the perfect good. But it is very numerous in Egypt in each of the so-called Nomes, and most of all in the neighbourhood of Alexandria. And the best people from all parts, as if they were going to the native country of the Therapeutæ, leave their homes and emigrate to a certain spot most suitable, which is situate above the lake Marea, upon a low hill, very conveniently placed both for its security and well-tempered climate. The requisite security is afforded by the hamlets and villages which lie all around ; and the well-tempered climate by the breezes given off without ceasing, both from the lake debouching into the sea, and from the sea in close proximity. The sea-breezes are light, and those which blow from the lake are heavy, but blended they produce a most healthy condition of atmosphere.

And the dwellings of those thus met together are indeed of a cheap and simple kind, affording protection against the two things which most require it, namely, the extreme heat of the sun and the chilly cold of

the air. For they are neither too close to one another, as in towns ; since close proximity would be burdensome and ill-pleasing to those who are seeking for solitude ; nor, on the other hand, are they far apart, lest they forfeit the communion which they prize and the power of aiding each other in case of an attack of robbers.

But in each house there is a holy room, which is called the sanctuary and monastery ; because in it they celebrate all alone the mysteries of the holy life, bringing into it nothing, neither drink, nor food, nor any other of the things necessary unto the wants of the body ; but only the law and the oracles delivered under inspiration by the prophets along with the Psalms, and the other (books) by means of which religion and sound knowledge grow together into one perfect whole.

And so it is that they for ever remember God and forget him not ; in such wise that even in their dreams they picture to themselves nothing else but the beauties of the divine excellencies and powers. Yea, and many of them even utter forth in their sleep, when lapt in dreams, the glorious doctrines of their holy philosophy.

And twice every day they are accustomed to pray, about dawn and about eventide ; praying at sunrise for a fair day for themselves, for the day, which is really fair, which meaneth that their minds be filled with heavenly light. But at sunset they pray that the soul be wholly relieved of the disorderly throng of the senses and of sensible things, and left free to track out and explore truth in its own conclave and council-chamber.

But the entire interval from dawn to evening is given up by them to spiritual exercises. For they read the holy scriptures and draw out in thought and allegory their ancestral code of law. Since they regard the literal meanings as symbols of an inner and hidden nature revealing itself in covert ideas. But they have also writings drawn up by the men of a former age, who were the founders of their sect, and left many commentaries upon the idea involved in the allegories ; and these writings they use as exemplars of a kind, emulating the ideal of character traced out in them. And so it is that they do not only contemplate, but also compose songs and hymns to God in divers strains and measures, which they write out in solemn rhythms as best they can.

M. 476.

Now during the six days they remain apart, in strict isolation one from the other, in their houses in the monasteries afore mentioned ; never passing the courtyard gate, nay, not even surveying it from a distance. But every seventh day they come together, as it were, into a common assembly ; and sit down in order according to age in the becoming posture ; holding their hands inwards, the right hand between the chest and the chin, but the left tucked down along the flank. And then the one that is eldest and most skilled in their principles discourses, with steady glance and steady voice, with argument and wisdom ; not

making a display of his cleverness in speaking, like the rhetors or the sophists of to-day, but having carefully sifted and carefully interpreting the exact meaning of the thoughts, which meaning doth not merely alight on the outer ear, but passes through their organs of hearing into the soul, and there firmly abides.¹ But the others all listen, in silence, merely hinting their approval by an inclination of eye or head.

And this common sanctuary, in which they meet on the seventh days, is a double enclosure, divided into one chamber for the men and another for the women. For women, too, as well as men, of custom form part of the audience, having the same zeal and following the same mode of life. But the wall which runs midway up the buildings is, part of it, built up together like a breastwork from the floor to a height of three or four cubits ; but that part which extends above the ground (or as a loft) up to the roof is left open for two reasons : namely, to safeguard the modesty which is proper to woman's nature, and, at the same time, to facilitate on the part of those who sit within the auditory the apprehension of what is said ; there being nothing to impede the voice of him that discourses from passing freely to them.

4.—But continence they lay down, as it were, as a primitive foundation for the soul, and on it they build up the rest of the virtues. And not one of them will partake of meat or drink before sunset ; in as much as they judge the pursuit of wisdom to be consonant with the light, just as the wants of the body are with the darkness. Wherefore, they assign to the former the day, but to the latter an insignificant portion of the night only. And some there are, who at the end of three days bethink themselves of food, those, namely, in whom a more profound love of knowledge is seated. But others, again, so delight and luxuriate in the banquet, in which wisdom spreads out before them in bounteous wealth her teachings, that they abstain for double that period, and barely taste of so much food as will keep them alive at the end of six
M. 477. days ; having accustomed themselves, as they say the grasshoppers have, to live upon air ; for the song of these, I suppose, assuages the feeling of want. The seventh day, however, they regard as in a manner all holy and all festal, and have therefore deemed it worthy of peculiar dignity. And on it, after due attention to the soul, they anoint the body, releasing it, just as you might the lower animals, from the long spell of toil. But their diet comprises nothing expensive, but only cheap bread ; and its relish is salt, which the dainty among them prepare with hyssop ; and for drink they have water from a spring. For they propitiate the mistresses hunger and thirst, which nature has set over mortal creatures, offering nothing that can flatter them, but merely such useful food as life cannot be supported without. For this reason

¹ Cp. John Evang. xv. 7.

they eat only so as not to be hungry, and drink only so as not to thirst ; avoiding all surfeit as dangerous and inimical to body and soul.

There are then two kinds of shelter, the one consisting in the raiment, the other in the house ; and we have already spoken of their houses, declaring them to be unadorned, of a rough and ready description, constructed for utility alone. But as to their raiment, it also like the house is of a very cheap kind, by way of protection only against cold and heat ; being a thick cloak in winter, instead of a shaggy hide ; but in summer a smock without sleeves, the linen coat namely. For they, in all respects, carry out their ideal of modest simplicity, being aware that falsehood is the beginning of pride, but truth of simplicity ; and that each is like a fountain head. For from falsehood flow the manifold forms of all evils, but from truth the wealth and fulness of blessings, both human and divine.

But it is my wish to describe their common gatherings also, and their more cheerful ways of relaxation in their banquets, contrasting therewith the banquets of the rest of the world. For others when they have swilled themselves full of strong wine, are, as if they had drunk, not wine, but some deranging and maddening potion, or any other drug more baleful still in its power of unseating the reason. And they yell and rage like wild dogs, and set upon and bite one another, nipping of one anothers' noses, ears and fingers and any other parts of the body ; in such wise as to demonstrate the truth of the old story about Cyclops and the companions of Ulysses. For they devour, as the poet says, gobbets of human flesh, and with worse ferocity than he displayed. For he suspected that they were enemies and was defending himself. But it is their own familiar friends, yea, sometimes even kinsmen at their board and partaking of their salt, whom, in the midst of peace they treat so implacably ; behaving with the violence proper to a wrestling match ; but counterfeiting, as it were, the genuine coinage of training, wretches instead of wrestlers they, for there is no other term to apply to them. For deeds which the athletes perform soberly, and in the arena, having for spectators all the Hellenes in the light of day, scientifically, and for the sake of victory and of the wreaths which grace the Olympic victor's brow ; these miscreants perform in spurious imitation at their banquets, in the darkness of night, like the drunken, disorderly demons they are ; without science, nay, with evil art, to the dishonour and insulting and deadly injury of their victims. And unless someone like an umpire intervene and separate them, they take yet more licence in their struggles ; dealing death and courting it at one and the same time. For the sufferings they incur are not less than those which they inflict ; though they do not realise these in their paroxysms of folly ; who are ready to drink wine not, as the comic poet says, to the harm of their neighbours alone, but to their own as well. M. 478.

Wherefore it is that those who a little before went in to their banquets sound in body and good friends, quit them a little later as enemies, with their members mutilated ; and some require the service of surgeons and physicians, while others have to resort to lawyers and judges.

But some others of what appears to be a more moderate type of boon-companion, as if the strong wine they have drunk were mandragor, hiccup it up ; and pushing forward their left elbow and turning back their necks aslant, vomit up into the cups ; and are weighed down with deep sleep, so that they neither see nor hear anything, as retaining but a single sense only, and that the most slavish of them, namely taste.

But some I know who, so soon as they begin to reel with drink and before they are quite drowned therein, arrange beforehand to drink on the morrow, getting subscriptions and giving tickets ; as deeming the sure hope of future intoxication to be an element in the good cheer which at the moment they are enjoying.

In such wise they eke out their lives, remaining ever without home and hearth ; enemies of their parents and wives and children, and enemies too of their own country ; but most of all at war with themselves. For their sottish and abandoned life is a menace to everyone.

6.—It may be that some will approve of the arrangement of banquets which now everywhere prevails, out of love for that Italian fashion of sumptuosity and luxury, which both Hellenes and Barbarians have studiously followed, making all their preparations more for ostentation than for simple good cheer. Couches both for three to recline upon, and which extend all round, are manufactured of tortoise-shell or ivory, and of the more valuable woods ; and of them most parts are inlaid with precious stones. On them are laid cloths of purple with gold inwoven, as well as others dyed with divers bright colours, in order to attract the eye. And there is a multitude of cups set out of every kind. For there are drinkinghorns and bowls and cups and other vessels of many varieties ; Thericlean goblets most artistically made and daintily chased and embossed with reliefs by clever workmen. Then
M. 479. there are slaves to wait upon one, of graceful form and passing fair, as having been brought there not so much to do work, as to show themselves, and by doing so give pleasure to the eyes of the spectators. Of these, those that are still boys pour out the wine, while the big lads carry the water, all well washed and made smooth ; and their faces are painted with cosmetics, and their eyes underlined, and the hair of their head is neatly plaited and tightly braided. For they wear the hair long, either not having it cut at all, or merely having the hair over the forehead cut at the tips and trimmed off equally all round, in a neatly bevelled curved line. And their chitons are of materials spun as thin as a spider's web, and are of

a dazzling white ; and they wear them well tucked up. In front they fall lower than beneath the knee ; but behind a little under the hips, but each part drawn together along the line of join of the half chitons with bows of twisted ribbons doubled over ; so that the folds may hang down obliquely, the hollows of the sides being puffed and broadened out.

And yet others wait in relays, youths on whose chins the first down of youth is just beginning to bloom ; that were but a little time ago the playthings of Pæderasts, and are now tricked out with very superfluous finery for any services of a toilsome kind ; by way of showing off the wealth of the hosts, as those who use them are well aware ; but in reality it is a display of vulgarity.

Besides all this there are the varieties of cakes and viands and sauces over which the bread-makers and cooks are hard at work ; solicitous to please, not merely the palate, as might be necessary, but the eyes as well by their refinery. At least seven or more tables¹ are brought in, containing all the products of land and sea, of rivers and the air ; all carefully chosen and fattened up. There is flesh and fish and fowl, and each kind excels in the way in which it is served up and garnished ; for they take care that nothing is left out of the things which nature can supply. So last of all the tables are brought in groaning under a weight of fruit, not to mention the festal cups, and the so-called knick-knacks that end up the repast. Then some tables are carried away, depleted by the gluttony of the company, who stuff themselves like gulls, and gobble down their food, so as actually to eat up bones and all ; though other dishes they merely spoil by pulling them about, and then leave them half-eaten. And so soon as they are quite beaten, because their stomachs are gorged up to their very throats, though their lust of food is as unsatisfied as ever, being thoroughly exhausted and incapable of taking more food ; they turn their necks this way and that, and gloat over it with their eyes and nostrils ; with the one appreciating the fatness of the viands, and their quantity, and with the other the good smell steaming up from them. And then, when they are quite surfeited, both with the look and the smell, they urge others to eat, by praising extravagantly the way the viands are served, as also the host for sparing no expense.

But what need is there to dwell on these things, when they are already condemned by most respectable people, as stretching to bursting point lusts of which it were better to minimise the strength. For one may well pray for hunger and thirst, which are most deprecated of all things, rather than for the excess and waste of meats and drinks which there is at such banquets. M. 480.

7.—The two most celebrated and remarkable banquets that ever were in

¹ In antiquity each course of a dinner was brought in on a separate table.

Hellas, are those at which Socrates himself was present. The one was in Callias' house, and was held when Autolycus won the wreath, as a feast in honour of his victory. The other was in Agathon's house. And they were judged worthy of being remembered by men who were philosophers in character and language, to wit, Xenophon and Plato. For these writers have left accounts of them as being worthy of commemoration, because they supposed that posterity would use them as models of the conduct and mode of entertainment which is meet and befitting in banquets. Nevertheless, even these as compared with the banquets of our co-religionists, who have embraced the contemplative life, will plainly appear ridiculous.

Now the one and the other of them has its pleasing traits ; but that of Xenophon is the more suitable to mankind. For there are flute-girls and dancers, and jugglers and jesters, priding themselves on their jokes and wittiness. And there are also some other inducements to hilarity and relaxation.

But the Platonic treatise is almost wholly about love, not merely of men madly enamoured of women, or of women with men, for these passions are subject to the laws of nature ; but of men madly enamoured with males who only differ from themselves in age. For any refinements that there may seem to be in the treatise about Eros and the heavenly Aphrodite, are merely dragged in by way of being clever and amusing. For the greater part of it is taken up by the common and vulgar Eros, that filches away the virtue of manliness, so beneficial in war and peace ; and engenders in the soul instead a female disease, turning into effeminate creatures those who should rather be trained and braced in all masculine pursuits. And it also does irremediable harm to the youth of the boys, by reducing them to the level and condition of mistresses. At the same time, it does harm in essential respects to the lovers, namely to their body, soul and property. For the lover of boys cannot help having his mind put on the stretch for his darlings, having no keenness of vision for anything else but them, and at the same time he becomes blinded with respect to all other interests private and public. But his body is wasted by lust, especially if he is unsuccessful in winning his desire. His property however, suffers in two ways, by his at once neglecting it and lavishing it on the object of his amours. And, moreover, there must grow up along with it another still greater evil affecting the whole people, namely desolation of cities and scarcity of men, the lords of creation. For they artificially create a sterility and incapacity of offspring, who imitate those ignorant of husbandry, in sowing not the deep-soiled plain, but land tinged with salt, or stony and rough places ; which are not only of such a nature as to allow of no growth, but also destroy the seed cast upon them.

M. 481.

I say nothing of the mythical figments, and monsters with two bodies ;

which to begin with, grew together by mutual attraction in one mass, and afterwards were separated, as if parts which had merely come together, owing to the dissolution of the bond which held them together. For all such stories as these easily lead men astray ; as they can entice their ears by the novelty of the idea. But from a lofty vantage ground the disciples of Moses can despise such tales ; and keep themselves free from the deception, having learned from their tenderest age to love the truth.

8.—However, since the banquets so widely known are infected with such folly, and so carry in themselves their own condemnation to any one who cares to have regard to anything except fashion and the glamour of their reputation for being entirely correct and faultless of their kind ; I will contrast the banquets of those who have devoted all their means of livelihood as well as themselves to the knowledge and contemplation of the realities of nature, in accordance with the most holy counsels of the prophet Moses.

These meet together for the first time after seven weeks, out of reverence not only for the simple seventh, but for its power as well. For they recognise its holy and eternally virgin character. But this meeting is the eve-celebration of the greatest festival, which the number fifty has had assigned to it, as being the most holy and natural of numbers, being composed out of the power of the right-angled triangle, which is the source of the creation of the universe.

When, therefore, they have met in white raiment and with cheerful aspect, yet with the deepest solemnity, one of the Ephemereutæ (*i.e.*, leaders of the ceremonies chosen afresh day by day) gives a sign ; and before laying themselves down on the couches, they take their stand one after another in a row in orderly fashion, and upturn their eyes and outstretch their hands to heaven ; their eyes, since they have been taught to behold things which merit to be seen ; but their hands, because they are pure from unjust gains, being stained by no pretence of money-getting. So standing they pray to God that their festivity may be pleasing in his sight and acceptable. But after the prayer, the Elders lie down, each in the order of his election into the society. For they do not regard as elders those who can count their years and are merely aged ; but, on the contrary, account these to be still mere infants, in case they have been late in embracing the vocation. Elders are, in their regard, those who from their earliest age have passed their youth and maturity in the contemplative branch of philosophy, which truly is

M. 482.

But women, also, join in the banquet, of whom most are aged virgins, that have preserved intact their chastity ; not so much under constraint, like some priestesses among the Hellenes, as of their own free wills, and because of their zeal and longing for Wisdom ; with whom they

were anxious to live, and therefore despised the pleasures of the body. For they yearned not for mortal progeny, but for the immortal which the god-enamoured soul is alone able to bring forth of itself, because the father has sown into it rays of reason, whereby it can behold the principles of wisdom.

But they do not lie down indiscriminately, but the men's couches are set apart on the right-hand side, and those of the women apart on the left. Perhaps some one imagines that couches, if not of a very expensive kind, yet, anyhow, fairly soft, have been got ready for persons who, like themselves, are nobly born and of goodly life and practisers of philosophy. Well, they are beds of a rude material, on which are laid very cheap palliasses made of the native papyrus, raised a little near the elbows in order that they may lean upon them. For they remit the harshness of the Laconic discipline ; but practise always and everywhere the contentedness of true freedom, by opposing might and main the seductions of pleasure.

And they are not waited on by slaves, because they deem any possession of servants whatever to be contrary to nature. For she hath begotten all men alike free ; but the injustice and greedy oppression of some who were zealous for the inequality that is the source of all evil, laid a yoke on the weaker ones and gave the control into the hands of the stronger. In this holy banquet, then, there is, as I said, no slave ; but the service is one of entire freedom, and they perform such service and waiting as is required, not under constraint nor even waiting for orders, but spontaneously, and even anticipate their orders by their careful and ready zeal. For it is not any and every free man who is appointed to discharge these duties, but the novices of the society chosen by merit in the most careful manner ; as needs should be godly persons and noble, that are pressing on to win the heights of virtue. And these, like true sons, gladly submit to wait upon their fathers and mothers, and covet it as an honour ; for they regard them as their common parents, and as more their own than those who are so by blood ; inasmuch as in the regard of those who are high-minded, nothing is more one's own and akin to oneself than true righteousness.

M. 483. And they go in to do the waiting with their chitons loose and not girt up, in order not to wear the least appearance of being slaves or of demeaning themselves as such.

Into this banquet—I know that some will make merry, when they hear of it. However only they will do so, whose own actions are matter for tears and lamentations—on the days in question wine is not brought to table, but the clearest and purest water ; cold for the many, but warm for such of the more aged as are of a delicate habit of life. And the table is free from the animal food, which would pollute it ; and on it is set bread to eat, with salt as a relish ; to which hyssop is sometimes

added as a seasoning to sweeten it, for the sake of the luxurious among them. For right reason, as it counsels the priests' to offer sober sacrifices, so it counsels these to live soberly. For wine is a drug of folly, and expensive viands arouse lust, the most insatiable of brute beasts.

9.—And such are the preliminaries. But after the banqueters have lain them down in the positions set forth by me, and while those who are serving stand in due order ready for service ; their president, when silence has been established all round—and when is there anything but silence ? some one will ask ;—anyhow there is now a deeper silence than before, such that no one ventures to mutter or even take a loud breath—the president, I say, then, examines for himself some text in the scriptures, or explains one that has been put forward by another. And, in doing so, he does not concern himself to make a parade of his learning ; for he does not aspire to the reputation which is earned by cleverness in discussion. But he simply desires to see for himself certain things with fair exactitude, and having seen them to be in no wise grudging towards those who, even if they are not as sharp-sighted as himself, have at any rate as earnest a desire to learn. And so he proceeds in a leisurely way with his instruction, lingering and going slowly over the points ; and, by recapitulating them, impresses them on their souls. For if he ran on, and without pausing for breath made a rigmarole of his exposition, the mind of his audience would find itself incapable of keeping pace with him, and falling behind would miss the drift of his remarks. But they turn their faces upwards to him and remain in one and the same attitude as they listen ; signifying by a nod or a look that they understand and have taken in his meaning, and by their cheerfulness and by slightly turning their faces about their praise of the speaker ; while perplexity they show by a very gentle movement of the head and with a finger-tip of the right hand. But the younger members who stand by attend to the discourse no less than those who have lain down.

But the exposition of sacred writ proceeds by unfolding the meaning hidden in allegories. For the entire law is regarded by these persons as resembling an animal ; and for its body it has the literal precepts, but for its soul the unseen reason (or *nous*) hidden away in the words. And in and through this reason the rational and self-conscious soul begins to contemplate in a special manner its own proper intuitions. For by means of the names, as it were by means of a gazing crystal, it discerns the surpassing beauties of the notions conveyed in them. Thus, on the one hand, it unfolds and unveils the symbols, and on the other brings forward the meanings into the light and exhibits them naked to those who by a little exercise of memory are able to behold things not clear by means of things that are. M. 484.

So soon, therefore, as the president seems to have discoursed long enough, and when his discourse is judged to have met fairly and to the

purpose, the points raised, while at the same time they as listeners have responded with their attention; then, as if all were delighted together, hands are clapped all round, though for three times only. After which the one of them stands up and sings a hymn composed in honour of God; either a new one which he has made himself or some old one of the poets that were long ago. For these have left measures and many melodies of poetry in triple measure, of professional hymns, hymns for the libation, hymns at the altar, hymns of station or of the dance, deftly proportioned for turning and returning.

After him, each one also of the rest sings, according to his rank, in due order, while all listen in profound silence, except when it is time to sing the catches and refrains; for then they give out their voices in unison, all the men and all the women together. But when every one has finished his hymn, the novices bring in the table just now described, on which is the all-purest food, namely, bread leavened with a relish of salt, with which hyssop has been mixed, out of reverence for the holy table of offering in the sacred vestibule of the temple. For on this there are loaves and salt, without any seasoning to sweeten it. The loaves are unleavened, and the salt also is unmixed. For it is meet that the simplest and purest things should be reserved for the highest class of priests as a reward for their service in the temple; but that the rest should aspire to a portion that is similar, yet abstain from one that is the same, in order that their superiors may keep their privilege. 10.—But after the feast is over, they celebrate the holy all-night festival; and this is kept in the following manner:—All rise together, and in the middle of the banquet there are formed, at first, two choruses, one of men, the
M. 485. other of women, and a guide and leader is chosen on either side who is one most held in honour and most suitable. Then they sing hymns composed in honour of God in many measures and strains, sometimes singing in unison, and sometimes waving their hands in time with antiphonal harmonies, and leaping up, and uttering inspired cries, as they either move in procession or stand still, making the turns and counter-turns proper to the dance. Then, when each of the choirs has had its fill of dancing by itself and separate from the other, as if it were a Bacchic festival in which they had drunk deep of the Divine love, they unite, and form a single choir out of the two, in imitation of the dance long ago instituted by the side of the Red Sea to celebrate the miracles there wrought. For the sea, at the Divine behest, became to the one side a cause of salvation, but to the other of utter destruction. For the sea was rent asunder, and, with forced recoil, withdrew from its depths; and walls, as it were, of water were congealed on either hand over against one another, in such wise that through the intervening space there was cut a broad highroad, and dry for all to walk upon; and by it the host walked upon dry land unto the opposite continent, and

were brought through in safety unto the rising ground. But then the returning floods ran back again, and poured themselves on the right hand and on the left into the floor of the sea that had been made dry land. And straightway those of the enemy which had followed were overwhelmed and were destroyed.

But when they both saw and experienced this mighty work, greater than could be told of, or thought of, or hoped for, men and women, all alike, were rapt with the Divine spirit, and, forming themselves into a single choir, sang hymns of thanksgiving unto God, Moses the prophet leading off the men and Miriam the prophetess the women.

In closest imitation whereof the choir of Therapeutæ, male and female, has formed itself, and, as the deep tones of the men mingle with the shriller ones of the women in answering and antiphonal strains, a full and harmonious symphony results, and one that is veritably musical. Noble are the thoughts, and noble the words of their hymn, yea, and noble the choristers. But the end and aim of thought and words and choristers alike is holiness.

When, then, they have made themselves drunk until dawn with this godly drunkenness, neither heavy of head nor with winking eyes, but more wide awake than when they came in unto the banquet, they stand up, and turn both their eyes and their whole bodies towards the East. And, so soon as they espy the sun rising, they stretch out aloft their hands to heaven and fall to praying for a fair day, and for truth, and for clear judgment to see with. And after their prayers they retire each to his own sanctuary, to traffic in and cultivate afresh their customary philosophy. M. 486.

Concerning the Therapeutæ, then, let so much suffice, who embraced the contemplation of nature and of her verities, and lived a life of the soul alone. They truly are citizens of heaven and of the universe, and have been established with the Father and Creator of all things by virtue, which secures unto them love ; proffering therein the only meet reward of godliness—better than any mere good fortune, because it lifts them in advance straight to the zenith of bliss.

F. C. CONYBEARE.
